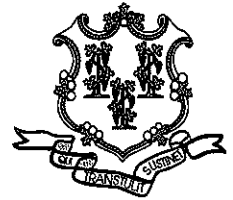




**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**Public Hearing Testimony
Human Services Committee
March 8, 2011**



**H.B. No. 5433 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE
AND NEGLECT AND THE RESPONSE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS, THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN
AND FAMILIES.**

The Department of Children and Families is **generally supportive** of H.B. No. 5433, An Act Concerning Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect and the Response of School Districts, the Department of Education and the Department of Children and Families.

The bill codifies many of the recommendations from a report of the Attorney General and Child Advocate entitled "*Protecting Our Children: Improving Protections for Children When Allegations are Made that School System Personnel Abused and/or Neglected Children*" dated July 8, 2010 concerning investigations of reports of child abuse and neglect in schools. This report identified a number of areas in the statutory scheme governing mandated reporters, the investigation of child abuse and neglect and the sharing of information across all the involved systems that may need improvement. The full report is available via the Office of the Attorney General's website at - <http://www.ct.gov/ag/lib/ag/health/DCFEDUREPORT070810.pdf>

DCF believes that this bill provides a number of significant improvements in the area of information sharing between school officials and the Department when we are involved in investigating allegations of abuse or neglect by a school employee.

The Department suggests that the Committee consider a few modifications to further strengthen this bill. Specifically, we suggest that you consider the following:

- Line 117: schools are only permitted to deny employment if the person is on the Child Abuse and Neglect Registry for abuse. The Department believes that this should also include neglect. Placement on the registry requires a specific finding by DCF pursuant to section 17a-101g that a person "poses a risk to the health, safety or well-being of children." There are many instances of serious physical neglect which could result in inclusion on the registry.
- Lines 274 to 286: this bill doesn't permit disclosing an unsubstantiated investigation to the school and State Department of Education (SDE). The Department believes that it would be beneficial to the school employee, SDE and our staff if we can notify the school and SDE of the results of every investigation because it would close the loop in these investigations. In cases of unsubstantiated allegations, as well as substantiated allegations, SDE would then have a written record of the results.

- Lines 314 through 325: there appears to be an omission in the language in that notification to the Executive Director of a private school or institution is deleted. We believe that the brackets may be in the wrong place. The other omission is that this section also doesn't permit disclosure of unsubstantiated investigations.

We would also like to **raise a potential fiscal concern** regarding the mandated reporter training requirements contained in section 3 and 4 of the bill. While we welcome the opportunity to train educational professionals regarding their responsibilities to report suspected child abuse and neglect, we do not have adequate resources to train a large number of new employees in all of the school districts in a very short period of time at the beginning of each school year. The Department is exploring potential on-line training resources that might be able to address these concerns, but such trainings have yet to be developed.

As you know, the Human Services Committee has already favorably reported another related bill to the Education Committee: *H.B. No. 5431, An Act Concerning Notice by the Commissioner of Children and Families to the Commissioner of Education Concerning Allegations of Abuse and Neglect by a School Employee*. In addition, the Education Committee is also considering *H.B. No. 6326, An Act Concerning the Response of School Districts and the Departments of Education and Children and Families to Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect*. DCF suggests that ultimately the Human Services and Education Committees consolidate these concepts together, as many of the statutory changes in the various sections are interrelated. The Department is willing to work with the Committee in developing specific language as these bills move forward.

<p>H.B. No. 6362 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING NOTICE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO IDENTIFY FOSTER CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOL IN EACH DISTRICT.</p>

The Department of Children and Families **offers the following comments** regarding H.B. No. 6362, An Act Concerning Notice by the Department of Children and Families to School Districts to Identify Foster Children Attending School in Each District. This bill would require DCF to provide to a child's new school with the name, date of birth and school of origin for each child in the custody of the Department who has been placed in foster care.

DCF believes that this bill is unnecessary, as the Department already provides this information. Attached to this testimony, is the form that we provide to schools when a child is placed by DCF. This form is used whether the child is moved to a new school or remains in the school of origin.



Notification to the Local Education Agency of a DCF Placement

To: _____
Director of Special Education/Pupil Personnel Services
(Responsible LEA)

_____ School District

Please be advised that: _____ D.O.B. _____
 _____ Child's Name _____

☐ was placed on: _____ ☐ will be placed on or by: _____

by the Department of Children and Families in a:

- ☐ Foster Home ☐ Parent/Guardian Home
☐ Group Home ☐ DCF Licensed Shelter
☐ Residential Facility
☐ Other (specify) _____

Name and Address of Placement:

Telephone:

Nexus Exists

School District

Basis for Nexus

- ☐ Mother: _____
- ☐ Father: _____
- ☐ Guardian: _____
- ☐ Address: _____

Telephone: _____

No-Nexus Exists

Basis for No-Nexus

Mother	Father	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Whereabouts are Unknown
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Has No Connecticut Residence
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parental Rights Have Been Terminated
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deceased
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identity Unknown
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resides in a Correctional/Treatment Facility; Does Not Maintain a CT residence.

Note: Based upon information available to DCF this Nexus/No-Nexus status has existed since (date):

- ☐ The child requires special education and related services or a written referral to consider special education eligibility has been submitted.

- Legal Status:**
- ☐ The Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families has custody but not guardianship.
- ☐ The Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families is the legal guardian of the child.
- ☐ The Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families is the statutory parent of this child.
- ☐ DCF guardianship ended on: _____
- ☐ The child's records can be obtained from: _____ School _____

Note: School placement decisions are subject to the provisions set forth in Public Act 10-160.

- ☐ It is in the best interests of the child to remain in school of origin.
- ☐ It is in the best interests of the child to attend the receiving school.
- ☐ The child will remain in the school of origin until a best interests determination is made.
- ☐ School placement decision is not applicable.

DCF SOCIAL WORKER/PAROLE OFFICER		TELEPHONE NUMBER	DATE
DCF AREA OFFICE/FACILITY	ADDRESS		

Copies sent to: ☐ Surrogate Parent Program – e-mail: surrogate.office@ct.gov – Fax: (860) 713-7052
☐ School district where child has been placed (receiving school) _____
☐ Previous school district (school of origin name) _____
☐ Placement _____
☐ Child's attorney _____
☐ Nexus (if different) _____
☐ Other (name) _____